

RECREATION ELEMENT

Recreation

A large part of the richness and diversity of the urban scene derives from the variety and availability of its recreational opportunities. Of course, a large part of these opportunities are provided by commercial and non-profit enterprises. But since the first American public park was built in the middle of the last century, there has been a steadily increasing awareness of the need for public recreation facilities. These latter are one of the major criteria used to evaluate and compare cities, their relative "progressiveness," their quality of life, their attractiveness as places for establishing business or industry or residence.

The City of San Diego provides three types of recreational accommodations for residents and visitors. Population-based centers are intended to serve the local daily needs of residential areas. Where possible they adjoin schools in order to share facilities, and ideally are within walking distance of the residences within their service area. Resource-based parks serve users from the entire City and elsewhere, and are located at or centered around some natural or man-made feature. Beaches, historic sites, natural canyons, lakes. Mission Bay and Balboa Park are examples of this type of facility. The City also provides other recreational accommodations that are neither population-based nor resource-based; these include sports fields, open space parks, plazas, large and small landscaped areas, and mini-parks. The three groups of physical facilities, plus classes and programs and activities at these and other locations, constitute San Diego's municipal recreation system.

Preservation, development and operation of its public recreational resources is one of a city's primary responsibilities. The intent here is to consider the City's broader and more comprehensive recreation system. Land is essential to that system; of comparable importance are facilities and staff service. All three are vital elements of the City's coordinated effort to provide opportunities for the constructive and enjoyable use of leisure time.

The Recreation Element interrelates in varying degrees with many of the other elements of the General Plan. Recreation is one of the major uses for open space lands, and resource-based parks are a major part of the City's open space system. Both the Recreation Element and the Conservation Element are concerned with the preservation and use of beaches, water bodies and wildland areas. Providing recreation facilities within easy access of residential areas has important energy conservation consequences. Parks and recreation facilities contribute importantly to a sense of place, urban diversity, improved livability and accommodation of human needs with the City - all of which are concerns of urban design.

FINDINGS

At best, a city does not attempt to fulfill residents' entire need for recreation; it is not expected, and is unlikely to happen in the future. Public facilities in this country have traditionally played a relatively small part in the total picture of leisure-time use. However, planning emphasis is currently shifting toward increased guidance of and provision for recreation - in efforts to reduce auto use, energy consumption and air pollution, and to make inner cities and higher-density living more attractive and satisfying. To achieve this, an adequate and well-located system of facilities is essential. Also, despite the downward trend in the average work week and the

consequent increase in free time, the real increase in useable leisure is not as dramatic as might be expected. With the increasing pace and complexity of urban life, the use of available free time becomes critical. In effect, the need for recreation has increased faster than the supply of time available for accomplishing it. This places additional importance on providing a full and varied range of recreational opportunities, readily available to all.

Since their adoption, a lot of progress has been made toward achievement of the City's park and recreation goals. New park lands have been steadily acquired; development of facilities and recreation services have greatly expanded; considerable variety of service has been achieved. Recreation activities are offered throughout the City at parks, recreation centers, public schools, playgrounds gyms, athletic fields, auditoriums and classrooms. A variety of cultural, athletic, sport, social and craft programs designed to serve all age and ethnic groups are provided.

There is, however, considerable variation among the various communities and areas of the City with respect to the actual facilities provided, total acreage, and acres/1000 population. This is partly due to the uneven distribution of large resource-based parks: beaches and Mission Bay Park and Balboa Park fulfill needs of the entire City and tourists, as well as residents of the specific section of the City they are in. It is also partly due to the fact that the Park Service Districts and statistical areas used to compare recreation facilities are not really separable, independent units. However, even with allowances made for these considerations, appreciable deficiencies exist throughout the City and more in some sections than in others.

Of most concern is the relative lack of neighborhood and community facilities in some of the older parts of the City. This has occurred for several reasons: the General Plan standards did not exist when these communities were being developed, there was no park fee ordinance, and there is no space now to establish parks without displacing residents. However, the same needs exist as in newer communities where land dedication or park fees have provided recreation facilities. This problem is common to many older cities, and to the older parts of many cities, except where large-scale redevelopment has provided for recreation space. Given the current trend "back" to the inner City, increased citizen desire for public recreation, efforts to reduce auto use, increasing preference for active recreation and health activities, and the ubiquitous energy problem, it is apparent that facilities should be provided that make recreation an accessible part of daily lives and not a special, gasoline-consuming event that involves travel.

Both neighborhood and community facilities should take a variety of forms in response to the specific needs and desires of the residents involved. Neighborhood parks should be oriented toward achieving maximum neighborhood involvement in terms of interest, participation and support. They should be an important element in creating neighborhood identity. Community facilities should supplement the neighborhood ones and provide for more activities than the latter. Both should respond to the unique characteristics of their area; the type of facilities and services and the space arrangements should relate to the population and use characteristics of the area served. The space and equipment indicated as desirable for them should be considered guidelines and not fixed needs. Most are located adjacent to public schools in order to share facilities and land.

In older, already developed parts of the City, where recreation space is difficult to acquire, efforts should be directed toward providing staff and facilities which compensate for deficiencies in acreage. Land, equipment and supervision in varying proportions can still add up to recreational opportunity and service to the residents. If acreage is reduced, facility investment and leadership should be correspondingly increased.

Trade-offs and exchange among these various aspects of total service can allow the City to continue moving equitably toward goals while preferred levels of acreage are not immediately attainable.

Resource-based parks are intended to preserve and make available areas of outstanding scenic, natural, or cultural interest. They are meant to broaden the smaller, more daily type of opportunity offered by the system of population-based parks, and also are meant to serve the entire City and its visitors rather than any one community. However, parts of them can and do function to fulfill local neighborhood and community park needs of surrounding residents.

As a special resource-based facility, historical resources can serve both area-wide and local recreational needs when suitably located and identified and open to the public. San Diego's historical resources are treated in detail in the Cultural Resources Management Element. They embrace physical structures and geographic areas, both natural and man-made, which have some historical significance. Properly designated and available to the public, these can serve as a rich source of tangible historical material, leisure enjoyment and cultural enrichment as well as a practical asset for tourist-commercial and industrial promotion.

Parks are mostly financed by sales tax revenues and sales of city-owned land. Traditionally, park needs have exceeded the City's financial resources. To defray a portion of the cost of park and recreational facilities, the City Council, in June 1974, adopted a Park Fee Ordinance. This ordinance required land contributions or the payment of fees by the subdivider in conjunction with the subdivision process. It also requires that fees be paid by the developer at the time a building permit is issued. Collected fees must be used in the area of benefit.

The City also has policies regarding park development by private funds, and the allowance of credit when park and recreational facilities are furnished by the subdivides. However, park development involving private sources of funding must satisfy specific criteria.

Inasmuch as the amount of funds available for capital improvements for parks and recreation will continue to be severely limited, new sources of revenue should be explored. These may include increases in park fees in park deficient areas, user fees, bond issues for park purposes and mandatory land donations in large subdivisions.

GOALS

- **PROVIDE A RANGE OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTIVE AND PASSIVE RECREATION, EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES, AND NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTIFICATION, IN ALL PARTS OF THE CITY, ADAPTED TO THE NEEDS AND DESIRES OF EACH NEIGHBORHOOD AND COMMUNITY.**

- ENHANCE THE URBAN SCENE BY DEVELOPMENT OF AN EXTENSIVE AND VARIED SYSTEM OF OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION FACILITIES.
- ACQUIRE AND PRESERVE ALL BEACHES FOR PUBLIC USES.

GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

Population-based Parks and Facilities

An ideal balance of recreational opportunities cannot be achieved through just citywide application of numerical standards for physical facilities. These standards are important, however, they should be used with discretion rather than mechanically. They are only a basic tool for guiding and evaluating the adequacy of service to a given area and to the City as a whole. Their application should be related to economic feasibility and the nature of the specific neighborhood or community, and should allow for flexibility as specific areas change or the needs and desires of the residents change. Acreage, development and physical facilities, accessibility and distance, supervision and leadership should all be included in the total effort to achieve as much as possible the same degree of service or opportunity or need fulfillment in each administrative district.

Population based parks and facilities are intended to serve the immediately surrounding residential population. There are two categories of these:

Neighborhood Parks and Facilities

Neighborhood facilities should serve a resident population of 3,500 to 5,000 persons within approximately a ½ mile radius. Ideally, they should have a minimum useable area of five acres when located adjacent to an elementary school or 10 acres when not so located. The design and type of facilities should be determined by the population and use characteristics of the neighborhood. Play areas, multipurpose courts, picnic facilities, landscaping and lawn areas are usual accommodations when space permits and when appropriate for the specific neighborhood.

Community Parks and Recreation Centers

Community facilities should serve 18,000 to 25,000 residents within approximately a 1-½ mile radius. Ideally they should have at least 13 useable acres if adjacent to a junior high school or 20 acres if not so located. They should provide a wide range of facilities that supplement those of the neighborhood parks and which are determined by the needs, preferences and use characteristics of the community. Athletic fields, multipurpose courts, picnic facilities, play areas, recreation building, lawn acres and landscaping are standard facilities when possible and desirable.

TABLE 17
City Of San Diego Parks And Recreational Facilities
By Statistical Area And Type
June 1978

Statistical Area	Population	NEIGHBORHOOD/ COMMUNITY PARKS			SCHOOL TURF/MINI PARKS		OTHER PARK LANDS**		OPEN SPACE PARKS		REG./RESOURCE SHORELINE PKS.		CNTY/ST. NAT'L PKS***		TOTAL ALL PKS. IN THE CITY	
		No.	Acres	Ac/1000	No.	Acres	No.	Acres	No.	Acres	No.	Acres	No.	Acres	No.	Acres
Central	107,665	10	71.14	.66	6	2.47	1	.37	1	6.81	2	1207.25	2	10.68	22	1298.72
Coastal	152,590	10	128.11	.84	5	4.21	3	11.73	4	108.93	22	5152.47	2	957.60	46	6363.05
Kearny Mesa	154,420	23	319.32	2.07	2	13.00	-	-	2	863.28	1	364.75	-	-	28	1560.35
Eastern	264,400	39	681.38	2.58	9	16.82	4	17.62	2	582.65	4	2628.24	-	-	58	3926.71
N. San Diego	78,425	9	63.77	.81	4	15.10	-	-	9	61.89	2	253.73	1	1.00	25	395.54
S. San Diego	47,800	11	125.48	2.63	-	-	1	15.11	-	-	-	-	1	135.00	13	275.59
City Total	805,100	102	1389.20	1.73	26	51.60	9	44.83	18	1623.56	31	9606.44	6	1104.28	192	13819.96

* Population as of July 1978

CITYWIDE ACRES/1000

* * Includes such lands as Athletic Fields, Plazas, Cemeteries.

Neighborhood/Community Parks - 1.73

School Turf/Mini-Parks - .064

Other Park Lands - .056

Open Space Parks - 2.02

Regional/Resource/Shoreline Parks - 11.93

County/State/National Parks - 1.37

*** Cabrillo National Park - 80.60 acres

Border Field State Park - 135.00 acres

Old Town State Park - JO. 10 acres

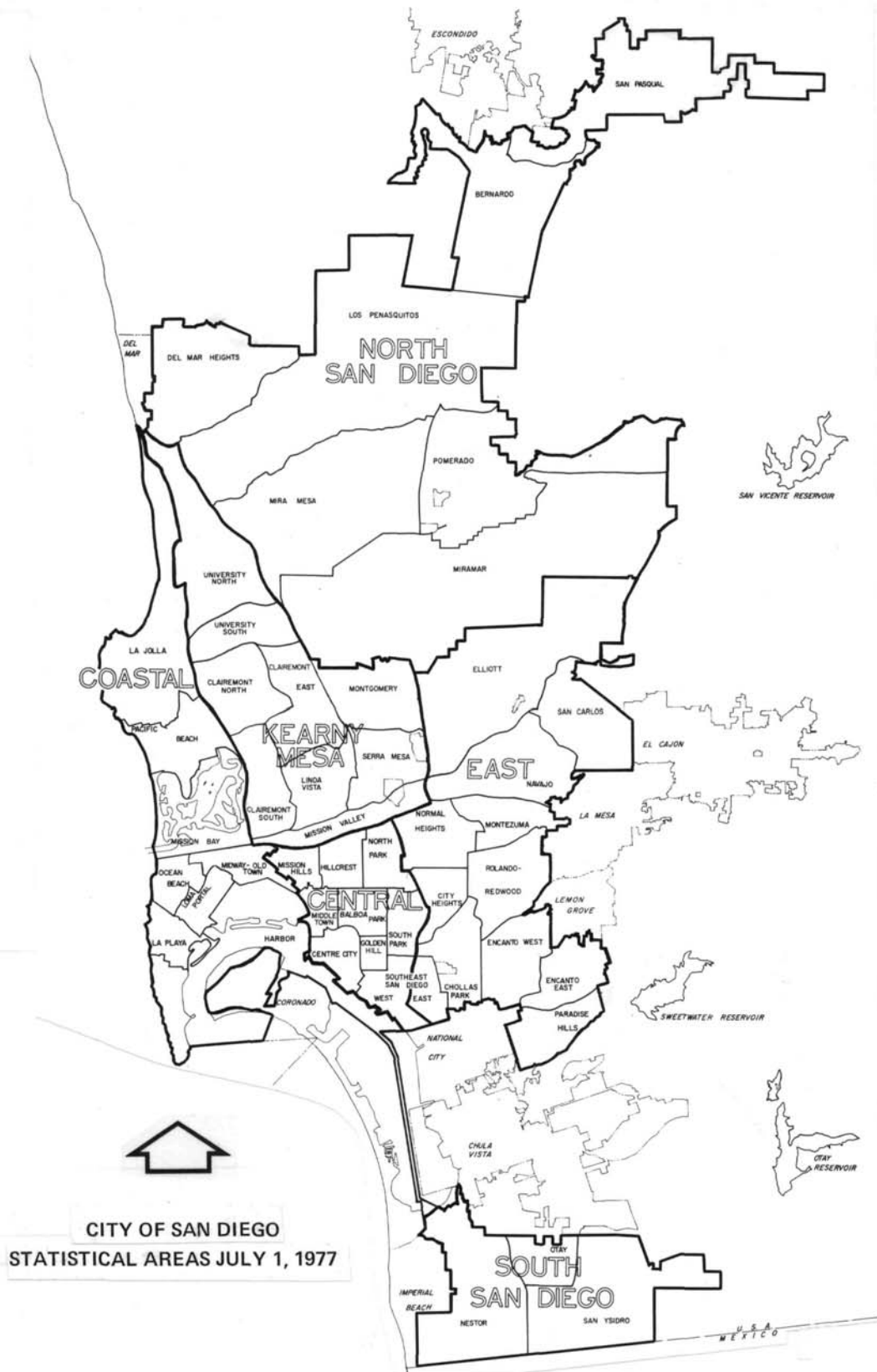
Torrey Pines State Reserve - 877.00 acres

San Pasqual State Historic Park - 1.00 acres

Heritage County Park - .58 acres

TOTAL ALL PARKS - 17.17

SOURCE: City of San Diego Park and Recreation Department, June 30, 1978



Swimming pools, usually located at community parks, should be planned to serve a minimum population of 50,000 residents within a radius of 1-½ to 2 miles.

Resource-based Parks

Resource parks are located at the site of distinctive scenic or natural or cultural features. They are intended for citywide use. Their size and development should be determined by the specific resource involved, expected use, available land, and location. Where appropriate, they may be developed with landscaping and recreation facilities. Beaches should have adequate restrooms. In general, development and amenities should not impair the feature or resource that motivates the resource-based park.

Total Acres Per Thousand Residents

Citywide, there should be approximately 20 acres of urban recreation land for each 1,000 residents. Population-based facilities ideally constitute between 1.0 and 3.9 acres/1000, depending on proximity to schools and the residential densities of their service areas. Resource-based parks should provide between 15 and 17 acres/1000. Open space lands, sports fields, plazas, and landscaped areas should constitute approximately 1.1 to 2 acres/1000 residents. These figures are norms or abstract concepts, however, and should not be rigidly applied throughout the City.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Make fullest possible use of multi-purpose planning to expand recreation opportunities:
 - recreation use of school facilities and school use of recreation facilities.
 - variety of compatible recreation activities within a given site.
 - passive recreation combined with cultural resource preservation.
 - appropriate recreational use of open space lands and wildlife conservation areas and water resources.
- Evaluate each park to be acquired and/or developed on an individual basis using the standards as guidelines.
- Address community needs in community plans.
- Retain all park land for recreation purposes only. As opportunities arise, repossess for recreation purposes desirable park areas that have been diverted to other uses.
- Design parks so as to preserve or enhance the topographic and other natural site characteristics.

- Utilize planting materials native to Southern California and landscaping compatible with our climate to reduce maintenance costs.
- Acquire non-public beach areas for public use, and preserve and identify access.
- Make suitable provision for parks or open space public areas in redevelopment plans for areas presently park-deficient.
- Needed park facilities in older urbanized areas of the City should receive higher priority in the allocation of available funds.
- Coordinate with private recreational facilities and commercial interest so that the private facilities complement and supplement the public recreational system.
- Review the existing fee schedule of the Park Fee Ordinance.
- Amend the Park Fee Ordinance to require park fees as a condition of building permits for construction where the underlying property has been previously subdivided.